Inside Out, Rocks

By Dinesh Agrawal

Wacky Posters announced the opening of a new play in Gurgaon

The latest play, Inside Out, is one more feather in its writer and director, Gouri Nilkantan Mehta's cap. Gouri is a graduate in theatre from Miami University and has directed more than a dozen plays in English and Hindi.Last time when I watched Gouri take an account of her actors' preparedness (they were all on the stage and she was sitting with a mic down in the spectators' place) I think that propelled them into lively action. Nine Jaloo Hill was a grand success and the uproarious applause from the audience made the actors jubilant in the end. A similar thing happened this time too when Gouri pulled up her socks and sleeves and reprimanded her actors for a

lackluster approach (they lacked throw in their speech and crispness in their movement) in the first half of Inside Out and that resulted in a much animated and lively performance in the second half; and that made all the difference, compensating the loss suffered.

The play begins with a monologue of a teenaged bohemian girl, Kamini who now calls herself Nargis, played by Narayini Kumar. She comes from her secluded living in Kumyun her half Australian mother to Gurgaon aspiring to discover herself. The cactus pot that she carries along is her sole companion. In order to avoid sneering from the city guys, she pretends to have come from Bangalore.In another monologue, a young man Nikhil, played by Karan Madan, discloses his aspiration for becoming a lucratively paid litigation lawyer in Gurgaon.Nayantara and Nishant, played by Niyomi Dey and Sheel Kalia, through a light hearted conversation, portray a domineering wife and a henpeck husband. Nishant does not like her playing Mozart, her snoring in the bed, her using eight pillows in the bed, liking golgfish and suggesting to visit Vahamas and Neemrana. Nayan loaths his ‘aromatic’ socks, the overuse of air conditioning and a noisy flush in the bathroom, and so on. After twelve years of their married life, they decide to separate temporarily.

A Scene from the play – where two is company – three is ??

Nishant with the help of Nikhil, gets a room to share with Nargis, and Nayan is persuaded by the same Nikhil to accommodate Neil, a Kashmiri migrant and a Health Insurance personnel, as a tenant, played by Rajguru Mohan. Here, the guy playing Nikhil, Karan Madan, who replaced the actor playing this role in the last minute, made his presence felt with his remarkable confidence and zest.After some pretentious lies about herself, Nargis discovers her true identity. Nargis tries to befriend Nishant to which he gives a cold response. Both the actors – Narayini Kumar and Sheel Kalia – portray their characters well. However, more variations in tone and gestures when switching from the pretentious self to the true self could have done wonders.

Nishant makes an attempt to come back home but finds a chit left in the house by Nayan, dissuading him from coming back. When again he comes to fetch his belongings, Nayan tells him she had sold them off.Lok Kala Manch offers a stage which confines the scope for movement; and, apparently, the play seems to have been conceived for a bigger one. The stage encompasses a single bedroom of Nargis on the left, a bar at the right back and the sitting room of Nayan in the right front and the left front is used for Nikhil, and Neil meeting him. The wise use of stairs in the last scene deals well with the otherwise cramped stage.

By the last scene, actors seemed to have shed off any inhibitions they might have had so far and they came in the fore with their striking punches. In the two simultaneous scenes played by Narayini Kumar and Rajguru Mohan on the one hand and Niyomi Dey and Sheel Kalia on the other concluded the play marvellously well.Separation for over two months seems enough for Nayan and Nishant to realise that they could not live without each other. At the same time, Nargis and Neil too discover themselves to be a compatible match.Gouri surprises! She surprises with her zest and zeal, her innovations, her hard work and accuracy. She surprises by beginning with

amateurs and turning them into professionals. She surprised this time once again with the same set of her skills, and endeavour.

— Dinesh Agrawal